

S E R M O N

I N

COMMEMORATION

O F

The Great Storm,

Commonly called

The HIGH WIND,

In the YEAR 1703.

Preached in

Little Wylde-street, London,

November the 27, 1734.

WITH

An ACCOUNT of some remarkable
DELIVERANCES in it.

By A. GIFFORD.

L O N D O N :

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MEMORIAL

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By A. G. L. B. O. R. D.



30. 10. 93



T O

Sir Richard Ellys, Bart.

S I R,

Humbly beg leave
to present you with
the following plain
discourse, as a small testimo-
ny of my gratitude for many
obligations.

A 2

That

DEDICATION.

That your's, and your
good lady's unaffected piety,
prudent zeal, and disinte-
rested benevolence, may long
continue ornamental to your
country, and blessings to the
church of Christ, is the hear-
ty prayer of,

SIR,

*Your much oblig'd, and
affectionate servant
in the gospel,*

A. GIFFORD.

PSALM



PSALM CXLVIII. 8.

*Stormy wind fulfilling his
word.*

THERE are indelible marks of the eternal wisdom and power of a Deity stamp'd upon all the creation: The God of nature and grace does nothing in vain. All the changes of the material, as well as moral world concur, in carrying on the uniform design of the supreme author and upholder of all things; and amongst the rest that fly at his notice, and submit to his controul, *stormy winds fulfil his word.*

This psalm is a call upon all the creatures, according to their rank and capacity, to praise the Lord: It begins with an exhortation to those of the upper world; in which re comprehended, not
B only

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only the heavenly hosts of saints and angels, *those ministers of his that do his pleasure*, whose constant business it is to celebrate him; but also those of the firmament we behold, the sun and moon, and all the glittering stars of light, *that declare his glory*^a.

Then the inspired writer mentions those of this lower world, whether in the air about us, or the earth on which we dwell, both rational and inanimate; each of whom, in their several stations and degrees of being, declare his excellency, and all unite in an ascription of honour, and song of praise. Our text describes one of these: In the consideration of which, it will be proper to enquire;

I. In what sense stormy winds fulfil God's word, *i. e.* the word of Christ the great Mediator, to whom all power in heaven and earth is committed, and whom the winds and the sea obey.

II. How in so doing they praise him. And then,

III. What use we should make of it.

I. Stormy winds fulfil God's word of command to duty and obedience; of

^a Psal xix. 1, 2.

threat-

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threatning upon the rebellious; and of comfort to his own afflicted people.

1. They fulfil his righteous and sovereign command to this or that particular service. As by the word of his power all things at first received their existence, so, amongst the rest, the meteors of the air, fire, hail and snow, the wandring inconstant vapour and stormy wind, were at once spoke into being by him: They are the product of omnipotence; *He commanded, and they were created*^b; and are entirely under his management: This breath of the Lord never returns to him void, but always accomplishes that whereunto he sends it. So that it exactly *fulfils his word, as it every way answers the end he designs by it*, and performs the service to which it was appointed, whether *for correction or mercy*^c.

Many and great are the purposes that it executes, besides purifying the air, conveying the clouds from place to place, by which it contributes to the fruitfulness of the earth, and the health of man, *e. g.*

It has often fulfilled the commanding word of God, as it has been instrumental (in the hand of his spirit) to bring men to a sense of their duty, and repent of their guilt and ingratitude.

^b Ver. 5. comp. with Gen. i. 5, 6, 7.

^c Job xxxvii. 5—14.

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He often calls by the voice of his word, to which even his people often turn a deaf ear, and thereby, as it were, force him to the use of his rod: But, if when he has spoken once, yea twice, and man perceiveth it not, he who withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous, will proceed to other and severer methods; binding them in fetters of iron, and holding them in the cords of affliction, till he shews them their work and their transgression, in which they have exceeded; by which means he at last opens their ear to discipline, *and commands that they return from iniquity.* Thus *Job* was brought to see and humbly confess his own vileness, by the Lord's speaking to him out of a whirlwind^d. *Jonah* is a remarkable instance of this: He disobeyes the command of God, to go and preach repentance to *Nineveh*, and thereby makes sad work for it himself: having fled from the presence of the Lord, by going aboard a ship for *Tarshish*, no doubt but he thought himself safe: However, providence pursues and arrests him in a dreadful storm, raised on purpose to awaken his conscience, and correct his folly and disobedience^e. This contempt of heaven had like to have cost him his life, which was

^d Job xl. 3—6.

^e Jonah i. 4—15.

saved

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saved by one miracle, as it had been endanger'd by another. What a sad case was this poor man in when his sin thus found him out, when he felt the sad consequence of his guilt in the weight of his correction ; how great must the horror of his soul be, when (as he describes it ^f) he was ready to give up all for lost !

Thus in that dreadful night, which we are now come to call to mind, how many poor wretches expected to go down quick into the pit, and feel the weight of divine vengeance ? There is one, if not more, in this assembly this day, who was in such a case, till the Lord, by the soft, still voice of his comforting spirit, commanded a calm in his troubled breast, by those words, *be still, and know that I am God*, and so hush'd his fears, and silenced the clamours of his guilty mind, by the sweet discovery and assurance of everlasting love. The example of *Jonah*, the storm we commemorate, and a thousand other awful and amazing providences should put us in mind, that 'tis dangerous to be out of God's way, or walk contrary to him. Who can stand before him when he is angry ? As is his fear, so is his wrath.

^f Chap. ii.

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The stormy wind also fulfils the command of God, as it is the means his Spirit sometimes uses for the exercise and increase of his people's graces; particularly their faith and patience, humility and love.

If by this, or any other surprizing providence, you have been brought to see the vanity of the creature, your own insufficiency to help your selves, humbly to submit at the foot of the saviour, and quietly to resign your selves to his disposal: If at such a time you were enabled to depend on him as a God all-sufficient, and could, through the influences of his spirit, chearfully commit your souls into his hands as unto a faithful Creator; or if the support and deliverance he afforded has excited your grateful returns of love and obedience, 'tis evident that he has been *humbling you under his mighty hand*, that your *patience has*, in a good degree, *had its perfect work*, and *that the trial of your faith will be found to praise*. In a word, that he has blessed his providences to your advancement in holiness, and has thereby been *working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight*.

Thus the Lord exercised *Peter* when the storm rose while he was walking on the sea. No sooner does the forward disciple

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ciple see the wind become boisterous, but he is afraid, begins to sink, and cries, *Lord, save me*^s: By this means a discovery is made to him of the danger of self-confidence and rash presumption, the weakness of his faith, and need of greater help than his own. So in that other case of the disciples awaking Christ, to acquaint him with their danger of being swallowed up, which, when they had by his kind interposition, escaped, their reflection was just; *He commandeth even the winds and the water, and they obey him*^h; may it not be carried a little farther than their immediate meaning? viz. he not only commands them to rise and blow, to cease and be still, but also instrumentally, to excite our wonder and love. So that

It eminently accomplishes his design, as it does, or should, induce us to see and own his greatness, to give him the glory due to his name, and the excellency of his perfections, as shining forth in all his works: 'Tis for this very end *he commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind*, that men might be excited to praise him for his goodness, and his wonderful works to the children of menⁱ.

^s Matt. xiv. 30.
cvii. 23—32.

^h Luke viii. 22—25.

ⁱ Psal.

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2. Stormy winds also fulfil God's dreadful word, that speaks his displeasure, and threatens his vengeance upon sinners who dare and despise him. How gracious soever and long-suffering he may be, yet he will by no means clear the guilty: His abused patience will, at length, be turned into terrible fury. *He bath his way in the whirlwind and the storm^k*, to avenge his quarrel upon them, who, by despising his goodness, treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of his righteous judgment. He will not always bear, but sometimes, even in this world, for the vindication of his injured holiness, justice, and truth, singles out notorious sinners, and makes them fearful examples of his displeasure. He visits them with *thunder and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and devouring fire^l*: So those that *dawb with untempered mortar*, i. e. sooth themselves or others in sin, with the hopes of safety, may expect to be *rent by a stormy wind, or carried away by an overflowing shower^m*. Like those who disobey the word of Christ, which they profess to believe; or build on any other foundation but himⁿ. It is the determin'd doom of the enemies of Christ's

^k Nahum i. 3.
11, 13.

^l Isa. xxix. 6.
ⁿ Matt. vii. 26, 27.

^m Ezek. xiii.

church,

of the Great Storm in 1703. 9

church, that the Lord will *send a blast upon them*; a dreadful sound shall be in their ears, and *the whirlwind of the south shall carry them away* °. Perhaps some, if not all of these passages will be said to be metaphorical: However, they incontestibly prove, that whenever a people, or particular sinners, have filled up the measure of their daring iniquities, the cup of trembling shall be put into their hands, and appear to be so in dreadful calamities.

Thus the Lord brought those dismal clouds that overwhelmed the old world by the flood; and rained an horrible tempest upon the cities of the plain. But the most remarkable example we have of this, is the drowning *Pharaoh* and all his host in the *Red Sea*. In the midst of his pursuit of the defenceless *Israelites*, with all the blood thirsty rage of a cruel tyrant, and fond presumption of success; the Lord disappoints the hopes of that harden'd rebel, in the midst of his career, and makes him to know, that wherein he dealt proudly, he was above him. *Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, amongst the gods? who is like thee, glorious*

° Zech. ix. 14.

p Exod. xv. 10, 11.

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in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Though it was terrible to the enemy, yet it gave *Israel* occasion to triumph. Hence,

3. Stormy winds fulfil God's word, as they accomplish his kind and gracious promise to support, and deliver his distressed people.

The promises are a sure ground of a believers hope in the saddest hours and darkest times. He knows that not one of these shall ever fail: Heaven and earth shall sooner pass away. Upon these therefore he can safely rely, as knowing he is faithful that has promised; but then, he is often at a loss to account for the way that infinite wisdom and love takes for their accomplishment. With the good old patriarch, he is often ready to cry out, *all these things go against me*; whilst providence is over-ruling all for good.

Little did St. *Paul*, perhaps, think, that the tempestuous wind which drove all the mariners *to their wits end*, was design'd to introduce a kind promise of strength and deliverance: No doubt but it was terrible to him, as well as the Centurion and the rest of the company, *when neither sun nor stars for many days appeared, and all hopes that they could be saved were taken away*; till the Lord, by his angel, gave him a
com-

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comfortable assurance, not only of his own, but the safety of the rest ^a. What a sweet support must this seasonable promise be to him, when the ship was broke all to pieces, and he was the sport of the tumultuous waves! Then to be assured, that how great soever the danger was, that not only himself, but all the ship's crew should escape to shore, as they all did, some on boards, others on broken pieces of the ship, must be reviving and comfortable indeed. Probably this was the time when *he was a night and a day in the deep* ^r; during all which dark and dismal scene, the notice that God had before given him, that he must appear before *Cæsar*, and bear witness also at *Rome*, together with this renewed assurance of safety, must strengthen his hope and expectation of deliverance.

So the Lord remember'd *Noah*, i. e. his gracious promise to *establish his covenant with him*; and therefore, in pity to him in the ark, and the creatures confin'd with him there, commanded *a wind to pass over the earth*, to assuage the waters, in order to render it habitable again ^s.

By this also the Lord has often appear'd to be a God, hearing and granting the re-

^a Acts xxvii. 14—26.
viii. 1, 13.

^r 2 Cor. xi. 25.

^s Gen.

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quests of his people : witness *Elijah's* prayer for rain ^t, and *David's* for deliverance : Both of these were answered by a storm. No sooner did the one ask it, but lo, *the heavens were black with clouds and wind* ^u; and for the other, *he rode upon a cherub and did fly ; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind* ^x.

But the most glorious instance of this kind on record, is the miraculous preservation of *Israel* at the *Red Sea* ^y; which, as it has been the wonder and praise of the church in all ages of time, so the hymn pen'd on the occasion, is an eminent type of that, which will be eternally sung by the heavenly choir ; and is indeed partly the same ; called therefore, *The song of Moses and the lamb*. Here providence and grace seem'd to vie with each other, which should be most display'd in the great salvation : Land, sea, and air, concur with heaven in the kind design, and all unite in *Israel's* deliverance.

Thus then the stormy wind fulfils God's word : He says to it, " Arise and blow for
" the humbling the proud, and punishing
" the obstinate ; for the quickening, com-
" forting, and saving my people : " *And*

^t James v. 15, 16.

^x Psal. xviii. 6, 10.

^u 1 Kings xviii. 41—45.

^y Exod. xiv. 16, 21, 22.

when

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when he speaks it is done. Accordingly, therefore,

II. Stormy winds fulfilling his word, praise him.

I. As they loudly proclaim the glorious perfections and excellencies of his nature, e. g. herein

His sovereignty appears with an awful glory. This is a full proof that as he does according to his will in the armies of heaven, so amongst the inhabitants of the earth: That for his pleasure *he created the wind*^a; that dreadful voice which, in obedience to him, shakes the earth, and makes even the pillars of it to tremble.

How conspicuous also is his wisdom! How unsearchable are its counsels; and the depths of it unfathomable by mortals! It is generally agreed, that the original and courses of this useful, though variable meteor, is unknown: *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth*^a: All we know of it is, that it comes forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working: The more we see of its effects, the more wonderful it will appear^b.

^a Amos iv. 13.

^a John iii. 8.

^b Ps. cvii. 24, 25.

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Stormy winds also display his uncontrollable power ; they rise and blow with an impetuous, irresistible fury when he gives the word of command ; and when he chides them they hush and are still : peace returns, and all is calm ; silence regains its soft and (peaceful) quiet sceptre, and reigns with an universal sway ; by the same power that he brought in the south wind^c, he stays his rough wind, from sweeping us away : 'Tis owing to his might that the skies send this amazing sound out of his treasures, where he reserves it against the day of battle ; and in that day the power of it who can understand ?

In a word, herein his infinite goodness and mercy often shines and triumphs to our comfort and his praise : 'Tis owing alone to this that we are continued in life, and have any of the comforts of it, who have forfeited all. His compassions fail not, his mercy endureth for ever ; he changes not, and therefore we are not consumed. They who have been preserved in stormy weather, have more particular reason to think so, seeing it had not a commission to hurry them away to the judgment seat. Whoever are silent, they should abundantly utter the

^c Psal. lxxviii. 26.

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memory of his goodness; and speak of the might of his terrible acts^d. Which brings me to observe,

2. That stormy winds praise God, as they excite and give us occasion so to do. *All his works praise him*; as a beautiful structure praises the skilful architect; or as a well drawn picture speaks the skill of the ingenious artist: *But his saints bless him*, as the children of tender, prudent, pious parents, rise up and call them blessed: They collect the tribute of praise from all the inferior creatures below, and pay it in one sum into the sacred treasury above: To this end are they chosen and redeemed by grace, that they might *shew forth the praises*, i. e. display the excellencies of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light^e. Whilst the inanimate creation is answering the great end of its being, canst thou forget, oh my heaven-born soul! what thou wast made for? No; join all the faculties of my mortal body, and more noble powers of my immortal mind, in the general hymn sung to the Creator. Whilst universal nature is constantly paying its silent homage, and angels that excel in strength, together with saints redeemed from wrath and sin,

^d Psal. cxlv. 5—9.

^e 1 Pet. ii. 9.

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are incessantly ascribing glory, honour and blessing to the enthroned lamb; let not thy humble part be wanting in the melody made by this joyful choir. Is heaven and earth, and sea *praising* him; *blest* the Lord oh my soul ^f.

This brings me to recount some of those extraordinary instances of mercy the Lord was pleas'd to shew during that dreadful calamity; which, by the appointment of Mr. Taylor, deceas'd, we now call to mind.

In some former discourses, a relation has been given of the manner and time of its rise and continuance; and in the last, an account of the damage that was done by it, to which I refer ^g. What I now propose therefore is, to mention some remarkable preservations, in which the great Governor of the universe eminently fulfill'd his word of promise, *to be a biding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest* ^h.

A tempest indeed it was that night so great, that scarce any thing could resist its fury. Smaller buildings were, for the most part, wholly driven away by it, as chaff;

^f Psal. cxlv. 10.

^g Preach'd at Wylde-street, November 27. and printed for Aaron Ward, in Little Britain. 1733.

^h Isa. xxxii. 2.

and

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and many of those that were more strongly built, receiv'd considerable damage.

Whilst many thousands of poor souls were at once hurried off the stage of this world, to appear before the awful tribunal of the great Judge; the rest were, for the most part, every moment fearing the dreadful summons; many of whom were unexpectedly preserved by the interposition of him, whose word the stormy winds fulfil.

No sooner were some frightened out of their beds, and others out of their houses, by the noise of this horrible tempest, but the roofs of the former fell in, or the latter were wholly blown down, and demolish'd, in which, if they had continued, they must have, in all probability, perished.

Many indeed continued there; and tho' they were buried in the rubbish of their roofs or walls, &c. yet, by the miraculous order of providence, were preserved from hurt; though some of them tumbled no less than two or three stories.

One particularly, was saved from being crush'd to pieces, whilst thus falling, by just so much of the floor and cieling remaining as serv'd to cover the tester of his bed.

Another that fell with two stacks of chimnies, from a considerable height, was preserved from hurt, by some joices that in

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falling lay athwart each other ; and after she had been buried in the ruins near five hours, was, when dug out, found sleeping, and altogether insensible of her danger : The rest of the family, twelve in number, escaped with their lives, by running into a vault, while the rubbish was falling from floor to floor ; which took up about the space of two minutes, and thereby gave them an opportunity to retreat.

In one house the chimnies of that and the next were blown down, so as just to miss the principal support of that end of it, where no fewer than nine persons lay ; and in the fall, it pleased God to order it, that two great sparrs, or beams, were pitch'd so as to support the other end, which else must inevitably have tumbled too.

But one of the most remarkable instances of this kind, was that of a house in the *Strand*, in which were no less than fourteen persons : Four of them fell with a great part of the house, &c. three stories, and several two ; and though buried in the ruins, were taken out unhurt : of these, three were children ; one that lay by it self, in a little bed near its nurse ; another in a cradle, and the third was found hanging (as it were wrap'd up) in some curtains that hitch'd by the way ; neither of whom receiv'd the least damage.

In

of the Great Storm in 1703. 19

In a country town, a large stable was at once remov'd off its foundation, and instantly carried quite a-cross the high way, over the heads of five horses and the man that was then feeding them, without hurting any one of them, or touching the rack or manger; both which remained for a considerable time, to the admiration of every beholder.

In another place, as a minister was crossing a court near his house, a stone from the top of a chimney upwards of one hundred and forty pound weight, fell close to his heels, and cut between his footsteps four inches deep into the ground. Soon after, upon drawing in his arm, which he had held out on some occasion, another stone of near the same weight and size, brush'd by his elbow, and fell close to his foot, which must necessarily, in the eye of reason, have kill'd him, had it fallen while it was extended ⁱ.

Another person, about this time, riding on the road, a forked tree fell, one part on his horses neck, and the other on his back, close behind him; and though the beast

ⁱ See the printed account of the storm, 1703. in which are many more particulars.

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was bruised all to pieces, he escaped unhurt^k.

These, and many more that I could mention, had their lives given them for a prey in that dreadful hurricane on land, *when there was but a step between them and death.* As to the deliverances at sea, I may, perhaps, relate some of them, if heaven permits, in some future discourse on this awful occasion; which when ever we call to mind, we may stand amaz'd and say, *What has God wrought!* But,

III. Let us now see what use we should make of the subject before us. And,

1. Do stormy winds praise God: Oh the horrid stupidity and ingratitude of men, who receive their all from him, and yet make no returns of acknowledgment or praise! Every favourable providence such receive, will be hereafter an aggravation of their misery. Even the winds of the air, and the stones of the wall, will bear witness of their folly and impiety: And if they are not swept away by the besom of destruction in this world, what a

^k Whether this preservation was in the great storm, I am not certain; because the account of my friend who sent the relation, is silent as to that particular: Though as to the fact his authority is unquestionable.

dread-

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dreadful storm will overtake them in the next¹; such is the sad insensibility of some; such their horrid contempt of divine judgments, that they regard not the work of the Lord, nor consider the operations of his hands: Even when his hand is lifted up they will not see; but are ready to say, Who is the Almighty, that we should obey his voice? But they shall see and feel his power too, to their eternal cost, when he hurries them away in a fiery *whirlwind, both living and in his wrath^m.*

2. Do stormy winds fulfil God's word; how much more should we?

Tremble sinners at his judgments threatened therein: How loud a call is this providence to unfeigned humility and deep repentance for our crying sins, whereby we deserve and provoke his resentment, and none more, than the impious flights put upon his word. Oh may his spirit be poured out from on high, to incline us to return to him with all our hearts, *and prepare us to meet himⁿ*, when he is rising out of his place: Whilst the cup of trembling is put into other nations hands, and his judgments are in the earth, it will be our mercy to hear and fear, and be enabled by his grace, to learn and practise righteousness!

¹ Psal. xi. 6.

^m Psal. lviii. 9.

ⁿ Amos iv. 12.

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ness! If *Elijah* was brought to attend to the soft, still voice of his word, by the louder noise of a rattling whirlwind, why should not we^o? If the giving forth of the law was attended with such blackness and tempest as made the beholders *exceedingly fear and quake*; what must the breach of it be? Surely *our God is a consuming fire*^p. The authority it comes with demands our reverence; and such sweetness shines in it as deserves our love: Let us therefore, in the strength of Christ, labour to obey and comply with its precepts, which are indeed *holy, just and good*, calculated every way to promote our happiness. The word of God is a sure and perfect rule; and as many as, through the influences of the spirit, promised therein, walk according to it, may humbly hope for mercy and peace. Now the great command of it is to fly to the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom alone there is security and rest: 'Tis he that stays the murmuring thunder of divine vengeance, and prevents the clouds, big with terror and destruction, from bursting on our guilty heads: *There is no salvation in any other*^q; he only can *deliver from the wrath to come*. Out of him therefore you are for ever un-

^o 1 Kings xix. 11, 12, 13.

^p Heb. xii. 18—21, 29.

^q Acts iv. 12.

done.

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done. If any are by his convincing spirit made sensible of this, and are with one we read of, when in a storm, crying out, *What shall I do to be saved?* Such may look unto Jesus, depend on his merit, plead his righteousness, and beg that he would write his law in their hearts, and put his fear into their inward parts. He graciously assures such comers unto him, that *he will in no wise cast out.*

Having so done you may safely depend upon it; seeing he is faithful that has promised:

And rejoice in it as your charter for heaven, seeing not one good word of all that he has spoken, shall ever go unfulfilled: He will guide you by his counsel, and afterwards receive you to his glory.

Now unto the Father, the Son, and the eternal Spirit, the one only living and true God, be dominion and praise for ever. Amen.

[Acts xvi. 30;

F I N I S.

done. If any are by his convincing spirit made sensible of this, and are with one we read of, when in a storm, crying out, What shall I do to be saved? Such may look unto Jesus, depend on his merit, plead his righteousness, and beg that he would write his law in their hearts, and put his fear into their inward parts. He graciously affords such comfort unto him, that he will in no wise cast out. Having so done you may fairly depend upon him, seeing he is faithful that has promised:

And rejoice in it as your charter for heaven, seeing not one good word of all that he has spoken, shall ever go unfulfilled. He will guide you by his counsel, and afterwards receive you to his glory.

Now unto the Father, the Son, and the eternal Spirit, the one only living and true God, be dominion and glory for ever. Amen.

3 A 11. 20.

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